

Cape Town Cost of Living Guide

Despite being one of the top global tourist destinations, the cost of living in Cape Town is still cheap compared to many cities around the world. This guide will help you budget as an international student living in the centre of Cape Town.

CURRENCY AND PAYMENT

The South African currency is Rands (currency code ZAR) and money comes in 10, 20 50, 100 and 200 Rand notes. All retailers accept credit or debit cards, and most accept international MasterCard and Visa cards. If you are a long term student it is quite easy to open a South African bank account with a letter from the school to confirm your registration. Mobile banking (such as SnapScan) is very common, but cheques are not widely accepted.

LONG TERM ACCOMMODATION

If you rent an apartment you will usually need to sign a lease for between six months and a year. As well as private apartments and flat-shares, there are also private student residences with small self-contained studios.

	ZAR per Month	USD per Month
One Bedroom Apartment	R13,000 - R19,000	\$690 - \$1,010
Room in a shared house or apartment	R9,000 - R14,000	\$480 - \$745
Studio in private student residence	R12,000 - R18,000	\$640 - \$960

Apartments and flat-shares are advertised online on sites such as Property24 and Gumtree. You need to have a valid study visa to sign a property lease.

If utilities (electricity, water and internet) are not in your rent, add R700 - R1200 a month.

SHORT TERM ACCOMMODATION

Accommodation is available for shorter stays, but is more expensive. Usually you can find short-term accommodation through a platform like Airbnb or Booking.com, or your school will arrange a homestay with a local family or room in a student residence.

	ZAR per Week	USD per Week
One-bedroom Airbnb apartment	R5,600 - R10,000	\$300 - \$530
Private room in school residence	R3,500 - R4,000	\$185 - \$270
Homestay, including meals	R3,500 - R5,500	\$185 - \$290
Mid-range hotel (per week)	R6,000 - R9,000	\$320 - \$480

Short term accommodation can be much more expensive in the tourist season (December to February), and is often booked long in advance.

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EATING OUT AND ENTERTAINMENT

Cape Town was recently voted the best food city in the world by Condé Nast travel magazine, and eating out at restaurants is very affordable, even for students on a budget. The prices below are per person.

	ZAR	USD
Top gourmet restaurant	R750 - R1,500	\$40 - \$80
Good mid-range restaurant	R350 - R500	\$20 - \$30
Fast food meal with drink	R100 - R150	\$5 - \$8
Glass of wine or beer in a pub	R50 - R90	\$2 - \$5
Night out in Cape Town city centre	R400 - R900	\$20 - \$50

Some of the best restaurants around Cape Town are at wine estates just outside the city. A wine tasting with six wines is about R110.

South Africans usually tip 10% of the cost of the meal for good service.

CLOTHES, FOOD AND GROCERIES

There are four main supermarket chains in South Africa: Woolworths, Pick 'n Pay, Spar and Checkers. Like in any city, the price of clothes varies widely depending on the brand.

	ZAR	USD
Weekly grocery shop per person	R750 - R1,000	\$40 - \$53
Microwave meal or oven pizza	R75 - R100	\$4 - \$5
Good bottle of wine	R80 - R120	\$4 - \$6
Pair of Levi's jeans	R600 - R1,200	\$30 - \$65
Plain t-shirt	R100 - R200	\$5 - \$10

You'll spend a bit more shopping at Woolworths as it is a 'premium' supermarket.

TRANSPORT, PHONES AND TECH

If you don't have a car the best ways to get around Cape Town are by MyCity bus and Uber - both are cheap compared to other cities. Mobile data can be expensive, so keep an eye on how much you use. Electronic items are usually imported so can be also be quite pricey.

	ZAR	USD
MyCiti bus trip in the city (up to 5km)	R9 - R16	\$0.48 - \$0.85
Uber from Gardens to Waterfront (5km)	R60 - R 80	\$3 - \$4
One GB of mobile data or airtime	R80 - R90	\$4 - \$5
MacBook Air	R18,000	\$960